COLOMBIAN ARMY ADAPTATION TO FARC INSURGENCY

Thomas Marks

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FOREWORD

This monograph supplements a special series stemming from the conference entitled "Implementing Plan Colombia: Strategic and Operational Imperatives." The conference was cosponsored by the Dante B. Fascell North-South Center of the University of Miami and the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College.

This report comes at a time when the United States is seriously considering broadening its policy toward Colombia and addressing that country's ambiguous war in a global and regional context. The author, Dr. Thomas Marks, points out that Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) insurgents actively are pursuing a strategy to mobilize the disaffected and disposed people of Colombia, and to control the entire national territory. At the same time, he argues that no one in the national political establishment has taken the initiative to conduct an appropriate effort to deny FARC its objective. As a result, the Colombian Army has been left alone to direct the fight, without a coordinated and integrated national campaign plan or other resources that would allow for success. Dr. Marks concludes that the Army has bought time, and there is still an opportunity for the United States to help Colombia deal with its insurgent threat in new ways. This monograph provides a point of departure from which policymakers in the United States and Colombia can review where we are and where we need to go.

The Strategic Studies Institute and the North-South Center are pleased to offer this report as part of the continuing clarification of the uncertainty and confusion that permeate the national security debate involving the implementation of *Plan Colombia.*

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

THOMAS A. MARKS teaches social sciences at the Academy of the Pacific in Honolulu. He is a former army officer who has become recognized as the world's foremost authority on Maoist insurgency and revolution. He has also become a unique combination of soldier, freelance journalist and photographer, teacher, and security consultant. Dr. Marks' scholarly and journalistic work has been published in periodicals as diverse as *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, and *Soldier of Fortune*. His books include *Moaist Insurgency Since Vietnam* and *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective*.

SUMMARY

This monograph addresses the Colombian Army's adaptation to the insurgency in that country. It outlines the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) threat to the control of the national territory and how the insurgents intend to achieve that objective. Then, the author analyzes the measures the Colombian Army has taken to counter the threat. He concludes that no one in the Colombian political establishment is directing the counterinsurgency war, and that the Army has been left to conduct the fight by itself. Recommendations range from the strategic to the operational levels. They argue the need for (1) a coordinated and integrated national campaign plan; (2) cogent and enforceable emergency laws and regulations; (3) enhanced information warfare; and, (4) an enhanced operational flexibility.

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INTRODUCTION

Insurgency is a political campaign to mobilize the disaffected and the dispossessed into an alternative society. Until it can actually liberate areas openly, this takes the form of covert infrastructure. Always, unless the insurgents are incompetent—which does happen with startling regularity—their ultimate goal in deploying power is to create and safeguard the alternative to the society that they are creating.[1]

Governments, faced with violence directed at the system, initially go after that which they can see, insurgents with weapons, leaving the infrastructure virtually alone to grow and become ever more deadly. The forces of the state thus normally seek to "close with and destroy the enemy," while the insurgents continue the process of successively dominating areas.

What makes it so difficult for systems to see their way clear to an accurate appreciation of the situation is that the people in positions of authority are those who often have benefited from the status quo. They are comfortable with the way matters are, understand them, can't figure out why anyone would expect them to be otherwise. And even if they allow for the possibility of disaffection, they are expecting Robin Hood and his Merry Men to break from the forest and storm the castle. They are certainly not expecting a war in the shadows.

The bottom line is that society sends its security forces out to do what they get paid to do, arrest folks; if necessary, to crack some skulls. The rhythms of life go on—until the brutal reality of war intrudes. In those societies which have successfully dealt with this intrusion, response has involved considerable adaptation in existing institutions. This has especially been the case as concerns the armed forces, with

the army, as the major ground domination arm, facing perhaps the greatest task.

Roots of the Insurgency.

The Colombian army (COLAR) has taken the lead in the national response to the decades-old insurgency of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC. Just as Manila had its Huk Rebellion followed by its insurgency of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP), the second conflict rising from the ashes of the first, so Bogota has seen the survivors of an earlier 1959-65 conflict resurface as communist insurgents—who have become the most immediate *political* problem facing the country.

The present insurgent situation, in other words, has been a long time coming. What makes it such a difficult and now intractable problem is that it has become a creature of more fundamental structural contradictions long present in the Colombian polity, in particular a lack of state integration and cohesion. The historic symptom of this has been a profound legacy of violence. *Twice* as many people are murdered each year in this country of less than 40 million as in the entire United States with its roughly 280 million population![2]

Precisely why Colombia has this profile is a subject of much debate. The answer seems to be an early history that boils down to a squabbling group of settlers in a vast land with politics a zero-sum game. The practical effect was that formal democracy, established in the mid-19th century, remained a truly winner-take-all proposition. Thus those in office had every incentive to do all they could, fair or foul, to hang onto power—and to plot to get back into power once they were out. This led to multiple civil wars over the years, including the Thousand Day War, 1899-1902, in which over 100,000 were killed.[3]

The culmination, in a sense, was the national bloodletting called simply "The Violence," or *La Violencia* (dated as roughly 1948-58). An estimated 200,000 died, and hardly a region was not turned upside down.[4] As a simple matter of protection, local populations banded together in self-defense. FARC, now the major Colombian insurgent movement, had its origins in one such area, a cluster of "independent republics" in the central Magdalena River valley.[5] The republics were led by communists and taken over again by the government in 1964-65 after order had been restored through a power-sharing arrangement, the National Front (*Frente Nacional*, 1958-74), between the two major political parties, Conservatives and Liberals.[6] The rebel remnants moved into the southeastern savannah and jungle, where they engaged in "armed colonization."

There, they festered as a marginal nuisance for nearly 2 decades.[7] Other groups came and went, with only *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (ELN), based principally in the northeast, joining FARC in showing staying power.[8] To cut through to the end of the process, the growing involvement of the insurgents, especially FARC, in narcotics[9] provided a resource windfall which made hitherto marginal political actors into major players.[10] FARC, in other words, did not become a serious factor due to mobilization of an alienated mass base. Rather it became a serious factor due to the power which came from drugs grown by a marginalized population. In terms of national percentage, these marginalized actors would not be major players. They became so only because of their role as the base upon which drug cultivation—and thus insurgent finances—was built.

This dynamic is crucial. U.S. policy under the previous administration focused primarily on "drugs" but went to extraordinary lengths to avoid "counterinsurgency."[11] Certainly this stemmed as well from the multiple constraints imposed by Congress, particularly in 1986 legislation, but policy obfuscation eventually took on a life of its own. It even extended to the apparent slanting of intelligence so as to reflect a criminal direction of the drug

cycle (a posture which served the needs of actors such as the Embassy and the Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA]) even as the insurgent groups increasingly moved to a central role in that cycle (as was correctly, if imperfectly, reflected in Colombian reporting itself). It extended, during certain periods of the Clinton administration, to placing a nebulous conception for "human rights" before all else, even as Colombian military units grappled with a communist insurgent threat which in many ways began to amass superior operational resources to those deployed by the security forces.

A *communist* insurgency in 2001? Though active Maoist-oriented insurgent groups remain in the likes of Colombia, the Philippines, Nepal, and even Turkey, few take them seriously. This is to confuse strategic Cold War victory with local operational circumstances, where such rebel movements remain a threat. Such has been the case in Colombia. There, the lack of concern by the ruling elite played a key role. For decades following *La Violencia*, the insurgents remained largely "out there," out of sight, out of mind, patiently building an alternative society. No one much cared.

For there were and are two Colombias. One, roughly 33 percent of the country (see Figure 1), is west of the Cordillera Oriental. Much of this area is high country. It is there that the country's productive forces are concentrated. The other, east of the mountains, the *llanos*, is savannah, vast plains, and *amazon*, the jungle. More than 95 percent of the populace lives in the first area. The other 5 percent-minus and key insurgent formations are in the second zone. As long as the guerrillas were revolutionary homesteaders in areas no one else wanted,[12] the government bothered with them only when their actions forced a response. It was the job of the police and the military, went the logic, to keep an eye on them.

Yet FARC had big plans. In a key meeting, its seventh party conference held at Cubarral, Meta, May 4-14, 1982, it

Figure 1. Map of Colombia.

was decided that the priority task was to create a revolutionary army capable of taking on the security forces. To fund this endeavor and to gain manpower, FARC opted to exploit narcotics. By taxing all facets of the drug trade, it would obtain money. By protecting and controlling production areas, it would not only secure its income but recruit from the marginalized.[13]

"The goal was the creation of a 28,000-man army divided into 48 guerrilla fronts," notes Dave Spencer, a veteran of both the El Salvadoran and Colombian conflicts, now one of the top U.S. specialists on the insurgency. "The purpose of this army was to take advantage of what FARC saw as the existing political contradictions and the inevitable political collision that had to take place within the system."[14]

In other words, FARC believed that Colombia's democracy was flawed, that the concentration of the population in the arable portions of the west, in an economy dominated by agricultural production and primary extraction industries, had created distortions. Further, it tended to be a very dangerous place for those who advanced left-wing solutions to society's problems. An earlier effort at forming an open party that could mobilize masses for eventual incorporation into the struggle—a step outlined in the Strategic Plan—had left an estimated 600-1,200 militants of the FARC front organization, *Union Patriotica* (Patriotic Union or UP), victims of assassinations (there is no agreement on the numbers; some sources place the figure as high as 2,000). Precise blame was rarely fixed. Having suffered through previous bloodshed in which leftists had played a prominent role, Colombian society abounded in those more than willing to go after those who still dreamed of Marxist liberation. Still, the perception grew that advancing left-wing positions in open forum was extremely dangerous. And that which could not stay within the system, worked from outside it to bring it down.[15]

Nevertheless, FARC prior to 1982 had faced a conundrum. The system seemed patently, transparently

unjust. Hence, the situation demanded a movement to liberate the masses. Yet FARC, the mass-based movement determined to reshape society, found it could not attract the masses! No matter the inequities of economic, social, and political power, the population largely opted for participation within the established system of "elite democracy." No amount of ideological work changed the situation. The 1982 decision was the way out.

Though FARC considered the negative aspects of its approach, especially its links with the drug trade—then, mainly coca, now also heroin and marijuana—it was hooked. The payoff was simply too great. The money and the manpower allowed FARC to mushroom. Concludes Spencer:

> In 1982 FARC was just a small organization of 15 fronts with maybe 2,000 guerrilla fighters. By 1990 it had expanded its forces to 43 fronts with about 5,000 fighters. Now it has between 15-20,000 combatants in 60 fronts and mobile companies (these formations range from 60 to 400 individuals). This has allowed them to move to mobile or maneuver warfare, the use of large units capable of directly confronting military units of equal size, of overrunning military installations and smaller units.[16]

Considerable irony is involved here. For decades the dynamic outlined earlier went on. The marginalized allowed the insurgent movement, FARC, to exist. The government, faced with any number of insurgent movements, none of which were particularly powerful but which together constituted a significant problem, told its security forces to deal with the rebels. Though the government would at times move towards some sort of resolution—generally when enlightened or ambitious personalities appeared—grievances embodied in marginalization were never structurally addressed. Development was controlled by an elite, as was politics, and bringing the margins into the mainstream simply was beyond the mindset, and perhaps the capacity, of the system.[17]

This would have remained more a moral issue than one of practical politics were it not for the shot in the arm provided to FARC by drugs.[18] Led throughout by a single individual, Manuel Marulanda Velez, alias *Tiro Fijo* or "Sure Shot,"[19] FARC put its money into its military bite and caught the government in 1996-98 still in counterguerrilla mode. In a series of actions throughout those years, FARC demonstrated that it had entered the mobile warfare stage. Though coordination was effected in 1995 with ELN, the new war was principally a FARC show.

Modern communications equipment allowed a high degree of both tactical and operational coordination. Simultaneously, Colombia itself was weakened by the United States, which decertified the country in both 1996 and 1997, thus denying it aid and advice even as the insurgents moved to exploit weaknesses in security force organization, doctrine, and deployment. A harbinger of what was to come was the overrunning, on August 30, 1996, at Las Delicias in Putumayo, of a draftee company base of 120 men, killing or wounding half and capturing the remainder. Other actions followed, often coordinated with demonstrations by coca growers in municipal areas.[20]

Concurrently, a stepped-up campaign sought to clear entire areas of government presence. Mayors and policemen were particular targets, for once they were killed or driven away, a region became ripe for control. Special attention was paid to areas which would serve to isolate the national capital, Bogota. Urban militias were formed to multiply the combat power of FARC fronts themselves. Just how far FARC had progressed was brought home in late February 1998 when the understrength 52nd Counterguerrilla Battalion (52 BCG) of the newly formed 3rd Mobile Brigade (3 BRIM), deploying only 154 men in three of its companies, was lured into a prepared ambush and decimated at El Billar, Caqueta.[21]

As the Colombian presidential election campaign went on in August 1998, FARC launched a nationwide series of

attacks. The most significant saw an estimated 1,200 insurgents attack a draftee company of the Joaquin Paris Battalion and the co-located counternarcotics police base at Miraflores, Guaviare. Overrun, government forces again took heavy casualties: 30 killed, 50 wounded, and 100 taken prisoner. Anxious to act upon popular sentiment for "peace,"[22] the president-elect, Andres Pastrana Arango, personally met with FARC leaders, then ceded to them on a "temporary" basis, a demilitarized zone, as the price for entering into negotiations. Centrally located in the heart of the country, within easy striking distance of both the capital and other major targets, it was ostensibly an area where military activity was prohibited. FARC not only violated such prohibition immediately, but subsequently used the *Zona*, as it came to be called, as a coca production base and recruiting zone and as an unsinkable aircraft carrier from which to launch repeated strikes against government targets.[23]

This activity reached a new high in July 1999, when a massive offensive from the *Zona* sought to strike in all directions, to include at Bogota itself. It was followed by another in November-December, but both were stopped cold in fierce fighting which involved security forces knocking out FARC homemade but nonetheless formidable armor.

Security Force Response.

Blunting the offensives stemmed from significant changes which had occurred in the security forces, primarily the army, even as the insurgents were making headway.

A Colombian general analyzes:

> We were caught by surprise, because we had American doctrine. The American approach taught us there were two types of war, conventional and unconventional, what you call "war" and "other than war" (OTW). This is a mistake. This is your view, but it is not correct for us. Actually there is only one conflict, going from guerrilla war through mobile war to conventional war. It's all integrated. And we must be able to fight at all levels. By labeling this as a "nonconventional"' war,

> you Americans see it as a guerrilla war. You see the main weapon as the patrol against guerrillas. You call for us decentralize. Yet that's what we were doing, and we got caught in the counterguerrilla mode when the enemy shifted to the mobile mode. You call upon us to decentralize when increased command and control is more important than ever. It is what the guerrillas are doing, integrating all of their forms into a unified plan of action, with guerrilla attacks coordinated to support mobile action, with terror supporting guerrilla action.[24]

The Colombian security forces were quite unprepared for this sequence of events after more than 3 decades of small scale, counterguerrilla operations. The police, a national organization (*Policia Nacional*), though roughly 100,000 men, were spread throughout the country in small posts from which they engaged in the routine associated with law enforcement as opposed to warfare. The armed forces, too, in their disposition, resembled the dispersal of the U.S. Army during the Indian Wars rather than an organization geared up for mobile warfare. The army (*Ejercito*) had a plethora of battalion cantonments and rarely conducted operations of even that size. The air force (*Fuerza Aerea*) and the navy (*Armada*) were both small.[25]

Naturally, the army was expected to blunt the insurgents. Of its total 145,000-man strength, however, less than a quarter, some 30,000 men, were professionals. Of these, some 20,000 were being used in actual counterinsurgency operations. They were deployed in 3 *Brigadas Moviles* (Mobile Brigades or BRIM) and 47 *Batallones Contraguerrillas* (Counterguerrilla Battalions or BCG), a total of approximately 60 BCG (numbers varied; there were 4 x BCG per BRIM). These were professionals, all volunteers. The bulk of the army was draftees, only one-quarter of whom had even a high school degree. They were considered so valuable for national development that they were dedicated to point defense by the government. The result was that the force in the field was not only grossly inadequate but was deployed in such fashion as to ensure defeat.[26] This was precisely what happened during the 1996-98 period.

Change did not come immediately. Indeed, Pastrana's first defense minister, Rodrigo Lloreda, who has since died of cancer, resigned rather than go along with what he saw as the administration's drift in its counterinsurgency policy. In fact, at the same time, every army general officer, except one who could not be reached since he was in the field on operations, tendered his resignation.

Such a rough start, though, was overcome. The resignations were refused. Then, with a combination of rotation due to seniority, some out-of-sequence appointments, and plain good luck, Colombia put together a command team which began to turn things around. Though police and military were co-equals in the Public Forces (*Fuerzas Publicas*) under Defense Minister Luis Fernando Ramirez Acuna, the army was key. Army Lieutenant General (called simply *General* in the Colombian system) Fernando Tapias Stahelin became head of the armed forces (*Fuerzas Militares*); General Jorge E. Mora Rangel became head of the army itself. Both were former commanders of the elite mobile brigades (BRIM). Under them, the army was reorganized for combat.

The considerable difference between "combat" and "counterinsurgency" was appreciated. "Now that we understand what is happening, we have been able to respond," continues the general cited earlier.

> Yet the crucial question is how to control the ground. In our system, *everything* is prohibited. If you even attempt to uncover the infrastructure, much less dominate areas, you are violating something. We are in the position of fighting for a system unwilling to defend itself.

Colombia's essential counterinsurgency problem thus lies in the fact that the *country* is not engaged in fighting its own internal war. The business has been left to the military—all too predictable a stance given the mindset of a system so long at "peace," with so many problems (such as the narcotics trade and the high murder rate).[27] Just how such a situation came to pass after the reasonably effective

defense activities of the 1960s—carried out with our aid—would take a study all to itself.[28] Suffice to say, systemic inertia, mixed with the regular sacking of key officers in order to establish who was "really" the boss, resulted in a security framework which was effectively neutered.

That it was able to rally was because of the existence of the "two armies" mentioned above. One was seen by the press (theirs and ours), in the capital mainly. This was the "army of socialization," the draftee army intended to create a sense of national unity. The other, little publicized or understood, was the professional force in the BRIM and BCG, the units that had spent decades fighting guerrillas. This force assumed control of the fight in Colombia.

First task was to shake the five divisions which comprised COLAR out of garrison mode. Looking at a map of the country and moving clockwise, from the northwest corner, these divisions were I, II, IV, III, with V in the center, Bogota and its vicinity. The area where FARC combat power was centered, as well as its financial base (narcotics growing and production) was IV Division Area of Operations (AO). This was the AO where the significant defeats mainly had been suffered. This key appointment went to a soldier's soldier, another former BRIM commander, Brigadier General (BG), now Major General (MG), Carlos A. Ospina Ovalle. Other such appointments followed, and the effect was electric.

By the end of 1998/early 1999, many of components in the Tapias-Mora approach had begun to settle in. In addition to Ospina as IV Division CG, eventually, the team assembled was I Div, BG Eduardo Contreras; II Div, BG Eduardo Sanchez; III Div, MG Carlos Mendez; and V Div, MG Euclides Sanchez. Beneath them, it was no longer business as usual. At a meeting called by General Mora shortly after he assumed command, all general officers were required to take a pledge that in 3 months their units would be ready to fight. Officers who could not adjust to the greater

operational tempo were sacked. In one division area, a brigade commander and two battalion commanders were removed within 6 months. In all division areas, things were turned upside down. Bases were reworked, especially those likely to see combat. Positions were moved and strengthened. Crew-served weapons were redistributed—and, in some cases, pulled out of mothballs. Greater emphasis was put on the skills of warfighting.

In particular, funding was made available to begin conversion of many formations from conscript to professional status. The standard term for most draftees was 1.5 years (only 1 year if a high school graduate), not enough time to teach much. Since the standard composition of a division was three draftee brigades, each with three draftee battalions and a counterguerrilla battalion (BCG), virtually all manpower was locked up in essentially nondeployable assets. Only the 47 x BCG and the 3 x BRIM were real warfighting outfits. This had to change. By mid-1999, at the time of the FARC offensive, the changeover was well underway in key formations. By spring 2000, in an important unit such as IV Division, the switch was all but complete.

Infantry weapons and ammunition were in ample supply, but shortages of crew-served pieces and communications gear remained severe. Transportation of all sorts, whether trucks or helicopters, was all but absent. The army itself had but 17 helicopters, the air force had 50 (the police had nearly 100, but half had U.S.-dictated restrictions attached to them involving "counternarcotics only").

Though the army was able to effect changes quite rapidly, true jointness was not achieved easily. National headquarters was integrated, but this did not extend beyond the building. In the field, the services remained separate commands, a posture which initially hampered operations, especially where employment of air assets was involved. Yet gradually fragmentation was overcome, to the

point that by May 2001 a major operation such as "Tsunami," run on the southern Pacific Coast and having simultaneously deployed as many as five battalions, involved all services, to include air and sea/riverine assets of the navy.

To streamline the army itself, by January-February 2000, the traditional command division—1 (personnel), 2 (intelligence), 3 (operations), and 4 (supply)—had been reorganized into four directorates, each headed by a Chief: Operations, Personnel, Logistics, and Training. Significantly, under the Director of Operations (a planned MG billet) were actual operations (headed by a colonel), intelligence (a brigadier general), and psychological operations (a colonel). The latter received particular bolstering in an effort to dramatically alter the balance in information warfare. The consequence of this alteration in the way operations were conceived was that the army was turned into a combat command.

The Directorate of Training was similarly revamped to reflect the needs of warfighting. Normal service and military occupational specialty (MOS) schools remained under their own organization, the National Education Training Center (NETC), but a new National Training Center (NTC) provided the mechanism for manpower conversion. Whereas, previously, professionals came only through reenlistments of draftees, the enhanced manpower needs necessitated allowing direct induction of civilians seeking to enlist, as well as prior service personnel. Each had unique training needs. These were met through new, separate induction courses.

One of the planned outgrowths of rationalizing training and other administrative demands was the release from such duties of V Div. This returned what had become largely an administrative formation to the combat ranks. To generate still more combat power, especially such as could be rapidly deployed, General Mora grouped his elite formations, the three BRIM and the single Special Forces

Brigade (of four battalions—essentially Rangers, rather than true SF) in a Rapid Reaction Force (*Fuerza de Despliegue Rapido*, or FUDRA) under his direct control.

One division, IV, went a step further in its quest to cut response time and returned one of its BCG and two of its line battalions to airborne status through in-house training! For assessment of the vast IV Division, AO quickly revealed that helicopters simply did not have the range or payload to get ground combat power to flashpoints in as timely and efficient manner as the methods of a seemingly bygone era. Another IV Div unit confronted with a vast savannah to patrol took a page from a Vietnam War manual and produced an armored truck company, complete with mounted 50-cal machineguns and an accompanying 106mm "gun wagon." When this proved effective, numbers of such vehicles were increased to an army-wide brigade.

Refinement of Military Response.

Through such innovation, the military was able, in but a few years, to field a revitalized force able to be employed in a manner more appropriate to the new phase the conflict had entered, that of mobile warfare.[29] With primary effort directed against what was perceived as the main insurgent threat, FARC, a multi-pronged plan was put into execution by COLAR to counter the insurgent approach. First, a critical areas assessment was drawn up, and forces allocated to secure resources imperative to national survival and operations. Second, the military moved to blunt the insurgents' own strategy for seizing power. This involved cutting their mobility corridors (*corredores de movilidad*), going after intermediate base areas, and, finally, attacking primary base areas. It was a strategy which attacked the insurgent strategy and reflected the relatively sophisticated level of operational art practiced by the commanders who came out of the BRIM/BCG tradition.

It took as its starting point the reality that FARC has well-developed concepts for accomplishing its professed goal

of seizing state-power. To implement its multiyear strategic plan, the product of the 1982 congress and subsequent plenums, FARC utilizes the tripartite approach embodied in Maoist insurgency—mass line (development of clandestine infrastructure), united front (use of fellow travelers, both internally and abroad, witting and un-witting, especially human rights organizations), and military action. The move to mobile warfare in mid-1996 took military action to a new level, one whereby guerrilla and terror actions are used in conjunction with conventional action. Task-organized columns (*columnas*) are used to hit primary targets (though light infantry, these have featured massive indirect fires, armor, and sappers), even as numerous guerrilla attacks seek to conceal the objective, and terror sows confusion.[30]

Typically, a major attack will have a tactical and operational component, but both are intended to fit into FARC's strategic plan. That plan assigns to each FARC Bloque (see note 16) a primary objective—essentially, the major city (or cities) in that Bloque area. Local attacks are designed to facilitate the ultimate taking of this objective(s).[31] Thus—to use an illustration written about extensively in U.S. media—Dabeiba, a small town attacked in October 2000, is located along an important strategic corridor. FARC's Bloque Noroccidental (Northwest Bloc) for years has been working to open this corridor to allow access to strategically and economically important Medellin and its vicinity (COLAR 4th Brigade, I Division, has its headquarters in Medellin).

In FARC doctrine, the designated city-as-objective, whether Medellin or any other, is to be isolated by having its lines of communication cut and its sources of sustenance blocked, to include power and water. This requires systematic domination of mobility corridors so that seemingly exterior lines (imagine a spider's web with the target at its center) actually become interior lines when considered within a countrywide context.

Domination of towns and human geography within or along "corridors" allows FARC free movement of men and supplies.

Hence the tactical attack on Dabeiba was designed to drive out government presence, in particular the police. Such actions occur regularly. The operational intent, however, was to open up the mobility corridor using the same tactical kill zone technique (called a "defensive curtain"—a defensive *cortina*) which has been used time and again (particularly in the COLAR IV Division area, as indicated previously) to hold the corridor by luring the military relief force into an area ambush. The town, in other words, was but the bait—and the 4th Brigade relief force, which was hastily dispatched, went for it. Hence the publicity with five-score dead.

COLAR is well aware of this technique. Units of the IV Division successfully smashed identical ambushes in the July and November 1999 fighting, east and northeast of the DMZ (with kill zones as large as approximately 8 kms x 6 kms), inflicting hundreds of casualties. They succeeded again in even more difficult circumstances in July 2000 in the combined Colombia (the town)/Vegalarga operation near Neiva, Huila (where the kill zone was circular, with a radius of approximately 10 kms). In the October 2000 operation, however, the 4th Brigade did not utilize the proven techniques and so paid the price. In particular, the troops were not landed in total darkness, as has become normal practice, but went in at early evening. Hence, they ended up losing a *Blackhawk* and the 22 men aboard before forcing entry.[32]

The point is that there is method behind the actions which occur, and the COLAR counter seeks to counter that method of attack. The scope of mobile warfare is illustrated by the Colombia/Vegalarga operation, which ultimately involved two groups of four COLAR counterguerrilla battalions (BCG) each. They operated across a 40 km front, backed by heli-lifted 120mm and 105mm support

weapons,[33] and engaged half-a-dozen coordinated guerrilla columns that numbered some 3,000 men total—with additional guerrilla actions designed to conceal the main objectives, and targeted assassinations in the rear to increase dislocation. The Colombia landing went smoothly, but an initial government effort to land under cover of darkness at Vegalarga was repulsed; a second was successful. Evidence exists that the FARC forces involved had intended to use SAMs for the first time in the conflict but, for reasons not clear, were unable to do so.[34]

Once their very large kill zones were compromised in both areas, FARC units withdrew as quickly as possible for the *Zona*. Both COLAR four-battalion response groups (4 x BCG from FUDRA; 4 x BCG from IV Division assets) performed well, using two battalions each to push and two battalions to hook left, in an effort to get behind the fleeing insurgents. The FARC *columnas* suffered casualties but were able to remove most bodies as reported by area inhabitants.

Two underinformed media interpretations have relevance here. One seeks to present setbacks such as Dabeiba as common (a single *Blackhawk* was lost; the town ultimately was relieved—even if battered—but the 2 decade-old *Blackhawk* itself is presented as a wonder weapon, so its loss is equated with the downing of a *Stealth* bomber). The second claims that the United States is seeking to bring the Colombian military, particularly COLAR, "up to speed," and that somehow such U.S. training is designed to "reverse" a tide of defeat.

These are flawed interpretations. Obviously, Colombia itself suffers from state crisis. Yet, amid such, the military remains one of the most cohesive, competent groups in the country. Further, as I have indicated throughout this discussion, it is fairly good at counterinsurgency. Like all militaries that have just seen a curve ball, it is adjusting—and has done so in solid fashion since the days when it suffered several local reverses occasioned by the

FARC switch to mobile warfare. It is implementing a viable counter, even as the insurgents have continued to use the opportunity provided by the government's "Peace Policy" to recruit vigorously, drawing mainly upon rural youth exposed to both proselytizing and coercion, and to improve weaponry.[35]

FARC internal documents reveal that Bloque Oriental (Eastern Bloque) has been designated the locus of FARC effort, since it dominates what the movement calls the "center of strategic deployment" (*centro de despliegue estrategico*), the Cordillera Oriental area of which the *Zona* is a key part. All other Bloques are to support its actions. To that end, the *Zona* has been used in an effort to greatly expand Bloque Oriental's combat power. The dramatic decrease of the average FARC combatant age, as impressments have been stepped up, is particularly noteworthy in captured FARC video footage, augmented by COLAR combat tapes.[36] Such "kidnapping" is intended to flesh out and multiply the combat units which operate within each front (the so-called "650 Companies" campaign).

Bloque Oriental, as it has increased its combatant numbers, has been the linchpin of the mobile war approach, launching three major maneuver (light infantry) actions using the *Zona* as its base from which to strike: the offensives of July 1999, November 1999, and July 2000. Yet each of these, as with the actions of 1996, 1997, and 1998, has been accompanied by the normal guerrilla actions and assassinations, both within the Bloque Oriental area and throughout the remainder of the country. Indeed, what sets this central theater of operations apart is not the tactics but the operational art involved. The July 2000 attack, for instance, involved coordinated units from two different Bloques, Oriental and Central, and was intended to lead to future actions.

As noted earlier, such attacks feature very heavy (in terms of guerrilla warfare), coordinated *columnas*,

task-organized manpower drawn from different fronts.[37] Such *columnas* are approximately battalion strength. When wedded to the other elements of FARC's mobile warfare doctrine (use of indirect fires, armor, sappers, and air defense), these become elements theoretically capable of engaging their COLAR counterparts. Their inability to do so stems from a basic error, assessed thus by a COLAR general officer: "FARC continues to seriously underestimate the capabilities of a modern army which is performing in proper fashion."[38]

Dramatic as such action is, however, the ultimate danger lies in FARC's recognition of its relative political underdevelopment and its vigorous steps to rectify this situation. Its explicit assumption of the communist mantle is most interesting, not just in-country via the Clandestine Colombian Communist Party (PCCC), but also internationally, where it now presents itself in much the same fashion as did *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, as the torchbearer for the wounded international Marxist-Leninist forces.[39]

Thus it has established party schools and worked to expand not only cadre but the political educational level of military commanders.[40] It has publicly advanced its national front, the Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia. Hand-in-hand with this has gone expansion of the militia to protect "liberated" territory, to the point that many of these local forces in the *llanos* are now armed with high-powered firearms (HPF), to include AKMs from the East German stock.[41]

Given its history, it is evident that FARC is in many respects a large *foco* in search of a mass base. This it has achieved, together with funding, as a result of the 1982 decision (at the national conference) to join with the drug production populations and to tax that drug production process. What is significant, since the creation of the *Zona*, is not the increase in the number of FARC combatants—almost 100 percent in some cases; present

order of battle figures list approximately 16,500 combatants, with a militia figure of another 50-70 percent above that—but the growth of the infrastructure behind this increase. This infrastructure has hitherto been rudimentary but now shows, for the first time, signs of vitality—in the strategic space provided by inept government approach. If such gets off the ground, FARC will be a much more dangerous foe than before.

To prevent this, COLAR has proceeded on the basis of identifying, prioritizing, and attacking the mobility corridors in each FARC area so as to prevent access to populated zones, by either guerrilla units or the much larger mobile warfare columns. The battle over these unseen "highways" has driven much of the action of the last several years. Beginning in 2001, the army moved on to attacking the base areas used to "generate" FARC combat power.

What is unique in the present experience is that the Colombian military has the singular disadvantage of being forced to engage in counterinsurgency operations at a time when strategic Cold War victory has caused all potential sources of support, both ideological and material, to turn their backs on the operational remnants of the failed communist crusade. Hence, Bogota finds itself quite on its own—at the very time when policymakers, both Colombian and American, have little knowledge as to the realities of insurgency-counterinsurgency, particularly the philosophy and mechanics of internal war. This has thrust the burden of conducting counterinsurgency almost completely upon the shoulders of the Colombian military, principally COLAR. It has taken up this burden, at considerable cost,[42] driving FARC to return to a guerrilla-driven approach rather than one where mobile warfare leads.

Dilemmas in Systemic Response.

Nevertheless, the contradiction in the government position is well-understood by the military.[43] The security forces have been fully occupied with their first priority,

getting their house in order so that they can address the full range of the FARC threat, from terror to guerrilla warfare to mobile war. They have demonstrated that they are quite capable of responding to difficult circumstances. The victories have followed. There is satisfaction in this, but that is the trap General Westmoreland fell into in Vietnam, where the means became the strategic end. The Colombian military recognizes the dilemma. There is no shortage of officers who have read the basic texts on the Vietnam War.

Indeed, FARC has responded as did the communists in Vietnam, by returning to the domination of the human terrain. In this, it has proved every bit as ruthless as the Viet Cong. Torture and assassination, not to mention kidnapping and extortion, are so common as to go almost without comment except in the most extreme cases.

Echoes of Vietnam in the FARC approach should not be surprising. FARC (and also ELN) was trained directly by the FMLN of El Salvador. The FMLN, in turn, was trained, both at home and through personnel sent abroad, by Vietnam. FARC manuals are very similar to FMLN manuals. And anyone reading either would swear he was having a flashback to the American involvement in Indochina. Strategically, operationally, tactically, it is the Vietnamese approach.[44]

What is that approach?[45] The constant interplay between the political and the military is key—with the Maoist template, if anything, being regarded by the Vietnamese as too militaristic and parochial in its emphases (not enough emphasis upon fostering "international solidarity," for instance). On the ground, the Vietnamese emphasize that the "three stages" *occur simultaneously as dictated by local circumstances*, the so-called "war of interlocking." The greater level of command and control made possible by modern, off-the-shelf communications gear coordinates lower levels of activity so that they support or are part of higher levels. Widely dispersed guerrilla attacks, for example, have both

local objectives and prepare the way for mobile warfare operations.

This brings us back to the problems with Bogota's approach until now, pursued at U.S. urging: a country the size of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana (or, if one looks to Europe: France, Spain, and Portugal) has basically 30-45,000 personnel performing as firemen. The initiative may be wrested from the enemy, but victories can not be solidified in the absence of government popular mobilization to hold ground.

FARC understands this and has been energetically pursuing successive domination of areas. Recognizing that for the moment it cannot go head-to-head with the armed forces, it is again concentrating upon hitting isolated, static police positions and uncooperative mayors. An army report made in 1997 found that the mayors of 13.1 percent of Colombia's 1,059 municipalities, or counties (I have another government list which claims a smaller figure of 1,025 municipalities nationwide), had direct links to the insurgents. Another 44 percent had to collaborate in one degree or another. The U.S. press somehow transformed this into "40 percent of Colombia controlled by the guerrillas." This is obviously incorrect, but the point can still be made that it is control of human terrain which is the key. And in that contest, while there is nowhere the military cannot presently go, there are many areas where going there would be quite a fight and costly.

The need, then, is for local forces which can secure the ground. No counterinsurgency can be won without them, for they are the only way in which domination of areas can be carried out. Yet in Colombia, as part of the 1990-91 settlement with another insurgent group, M-19, a prohibition was written into the constitution against armed bodies operating outside of the armed forces and police.[46]

Rather than dealing with this in straightforward fashion, as has every other system fighting internal war, by mobilizing anti-insurgent "people's war" as military

auxiliaries, the Colombian political and judicial systems have fumbled and done little. They have then blamed the security forces when the vacuum created in the vast country has been filled by the autonomous self-defense groups (*autodefensas*) which have sprung up everywhere—and continue to do so. By refusing to work with Bogota to find an approach to popular mobilization which will work, Washington has made the situation much, much worse. Indeed, it has demanded that the military spread itself still more thinly by "going after" yet another foe, the *autodefensas*—and that the police be increased in numbers.

Indeed, the baffling quality of the U.S. approach was at no time better illustrated than in early 1999, when, responding to direct U.S. pressure, the Pastrana government sacked three of its top generals, all veteran commanders—BG Fernando Millan (War College director), BG Rito Alejo del Rio (COLAR director of operations), and BG Jaime Humberto Uscategui Ramirez (then II Division Commanding General, or CG)—for alleged past links to the banned *autodefensas*, or "paramilitaries," as they are frequently called in the English-language press.

The United States hence became directly involved in the actions which led to the three generals' sacking—this in an army of but some 40 generals—for reasons which remain controversial and had as much to do with internal U.S. and Colombian politics as reality.[47] In so doing, the United States unwittingly crossed a line. For the Colombians, its presence became more conditional and tenuous than perhaps Washington realized. Put another way, to the Colombian Army, at least, the United States went from the cavalry riding to the rescue to just another element in the ongoing crisis, a generally positive force but one which would have to be assessed critically and watched.

This was not altogether an unhealthy development. Recent American involvements in internal war, particularly Southeast Asia and Latin America,[48] have had as a hallmark a tendency of the host nations to step aside in

something approaching awe of U.S. power. In this, certainly, we assisted—one thinks particularly of hapless Cambodia and Laos—nevertheless, those countries which fared best were those which took off the rose-tinted glasses and saw us clearly for what we were, political actors pursuing ends which were not always host nation ends[49]—Thailand and the Philippines might be cited in this respect.

Thus, early on, another line was drawn by the Colombian security forces, this one concerning the American $1.3 billion aid package:[50] it would not be allowed to become a source of strategic distortion. Even as politicians on both sides engaged in the campaign necessary to obtain the assistance, the security forces kept a close eye on what was demanded as the quid pro quo. At one point, COLAR—which was to stand up, with training from U.S. Special Forces personnel of 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), a new counterdrug brigade as the cutting edge of a "push into the south"—favored outright rejection of the package. But Colombia's politicians wanted it, with the result of the creation of a military within the military, a special "drugfighting" component.

To compartmentalize the "U.S. component" of the struggle— to seal off as much as possible Colombia's overall campaign from the possible meddling of American politicians responding to their perceived domestic concerns—Bogota detached the extreme south of the country—the departments of Putumayo, and Caqueta—and made it a special counternarcotics zone, Joint Task Force South (JTFS), to use the designation normally found in U.S. sources. There, the U.S.-aided counterdrug campaign could focus upon eradication. In the rest of the country, the security forces could engage in counterinsurgency.

Contradictions Guarantee Pathos.

Yet Colombia's forces are numerically quite inadequate for a campaign in the geographical and human areas involved—neither do they have adequate operational funding. Ergo, we find ourselves back at the *autodefensas*, who—authorized or no, legal or not—have filled the gap and engaged in some of the most vicious fighting against FARC (and ELN). And they make no bones about their favored methodology: to go after the insurgent infrastructure. In internal war, there is no way around the reality that a vacuum will be filled. By refusing to mobilize the population, Bogota ensures that people's war is waged out of control in every nook and cranny. By encouraging Colombia to adhere to this misguided approach, the United States pours oil on the flames. The result in many areas is pathos.[51]

Worse than this, the United State gives voice to human rights activists whose prime target appears to be the government. This has made it doubly dangerous to be an army officer, for it means a multifront war. Despite their protestations, human rights groups have little substantive to say about the daily FARC atrocities, which range from kidnapping (an important part of the Vietnamese approach, the better to bring about societal dislocation) to the most hideous torture-murders of prisoners. Instead, what many Colombian sources have taken to calling the "human rights cartel" too often functions as a weapons system for the insurgents, trying ceaselessly to go after the security force's top commanders, those of the army in particular.

At no time was this more evident than in February 2000, just as debate was beginning in the U.S. Congress on the proposed aid package, when Human Rights Watch (HRW), a New York-based advocacy group, released a poorly researched document entitled *Colombia: The Ties That Bind: Colombia and Military-Paramilitary Links*.[52] It focused on three key commands, those of Bogota, Cali, and Medellin, and attempted to implicate those commanders, past and present, in alleged crimes.

One of the most peculiar aspects of the report, in fact, was the effort to have it both ways as concerned the "Yamashita Principle" of command responsibility. In a portion on the 4th Brigade, for instance, the report (p. 13), while fingering some subordinates for abuses, stated that the brigade investigated adverse reports—but these actions were "easily deflected" by subordinates who were adept at covering up. Hence the commander must have been culpable. As if to cover all its bases, HRW dutifully noted which officers—to include the commander in question in this illustration—had attended, in any capacity, the School of the Americas—the connection ostensibly clinching the tenuous argument.[53]

Though the argument advanced by HRW was not viable as presented, its command responsibility claims did unwittingly serve to highlight a reality previously mentioned—the vacuum which emerges from calculations of numbers, time, and space. In the 4th Brigade illustration above, for instance, taken from 1997-98, the unit was tasked with safeguarding one of the more critical areas in the country, Medellin and the bulk of the Antioquia Department, Colombia's heartland in terms of the production of national wealth. The 4th Bde AO hence included more than 7 million people in an area the size of North Carolina (half a million more people than North Carolina). To cover this assignment, the unit had just three battalions of draftees, two BCG, and a cavalry squadron (i.e., battalion)—at most, 3,500 men—with no organic aircraft of any sort.[54] In the absence of any local forces, the impossibility of actually dominating the ground, of safeguarding the population, becomes immediately clear.

In reality, the situation was even more decentralized. One subordinate unit, Task Force Choco (TF Choco), had but 10 platoons (some 400 men) to cover the AO's 410,000 people in 9,719 square miles, a little bigger than New Hampshire. Those platoons were deployed so the TF Commander could never be quite sure what they were doing, much less the brigade commander.

That the unit was quite effective stemmed from its superb use of information warfare and its mobilization of *convivir*, citizens with radios to report insurgent movements. Yet even these, though declared legal by the Colombian Supreme Court, fell apart when it became clear the authorities could not protect their members from spurious human rights suits.

Another 4th Bde unit, the cavalry squadron, was headquartered in the vicinity of Rio Negro, southeast of Medellin, but one of its troops (i.e., companies) was deployed to La Union in response to insurgent activity. La Union, the town, had 4,000 people; the surrounding farming area had 17,000 people. The total police force for the area was ten men. In the absence of official power, prior to the deployment of the 100 or so soldiers, 11 families took the lead in organizing resistance to insurgent infiltration. Subsequently, in a single evening, their houses were simultaneously bombed. They fled. The conclusion seems self-evident: even with perfect knowledge, how could the normal security forces, the ten policemen, have prevented it? The four cavalry platoons were spread out amid 21,000 people—with no local forces to assist them.

A final point emerges, too, from these illustrations and their highlighting of the impossibility of the task in the absence of popular mobilization: the inadequate legal environment under which the security forces operate. To date, civilian law governs the conflict, rather than a combination of emergency provisions and normal statutes. This creates a situation which, operationally speaking, is impossible, where a misdirected strike becomes a cause for a charge of manslaughter, and so on.

What has been absent from the current debate on human rights has been positing of any realistic options for a state faced with an insurgent campaign built first and foremost upon retaining the initiative through terror and guerrilla action—retaining the initiative due to its ability to operate in areas where the government is absent. The point would

seem elementary as concerns human rights groups, which have been among the fiercest opponents of popular mobilization: you cannot demand the creation of a vacuum, then seek to blame individuals for not being in control of what happens in that vacuum.[55]

Imperfect Democracy Struggles On.

It is this strange environment in which the Colombian security forces seek to protect a system which does not do much to protect *them*. American official involvement with such attacks has cost Washington dearly, far more than is appreciated. Further, the American position has been a factor in opening the door to abuse of genuine concern for human rights.

And there is always the danger of pushing the security forces too far. At present, no credible observers have reported signs, even discussions, of movement beyond the military realm. What could cause this to change is a combination of forces: continued abuse of the human rights system added to government ineptness which was perceived as endangering the very existence or essence of the Colombian state. Patriotism runs deep within the "public forces." They will remain loyal to civilian control as long as certain essentials are respected. First and foremost among these is to protect the democratic society from those who would overthrow it from within.

There is a school of thought which looks to the past, to the errors which have indisputably been made—and continue to be made—by Colombia in the handling of the insurgency. It argues that the key is conversion of the guerrillas into legitimate political forces—by all means short of force. Therein lies the dilemma of the present situation: such advocacy is understandable but will not work.

Once an insurgent movement becomes a going concern, the dynamic which obtains is quite different from that

which may have given it life initially. It becomes an alternative social structure, able to recruit, assign, promote, and control. It is a mistake to equate existence with legitimacy. The insurgents in Colombia have no significant support base. To the contrary, they "control" territory in areas where there is little—save, in many cases, coca/poppy/marijuana and a transplanted work force. The "insurgents control 40 percent" figure, so often used by the U.S. media, first surfaced, apparently, as a result of misinterpretation of background briefings concerning the army report mentioned above. The figure then took on a life of its own, at times rising to 50 percent.

Reality is more complex—and more typical of an insurgent environment.[56] Increasing rural and urban areas, the latter 75 percent of the populace, are indeed becoming "contested." Everywhere, though, since FARC has minimal popular support, *terror* is the dominant FARC tactic. As was the case with *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru,[57] this distorts the actual insurgent position to make it appear as one of strength and widespread dominance.

Perhaps most importantly, while the state certainly had a role in creating the original insurgency and then made it worse, FARC combatant numbers do not stem from this earlier era. The present insurgents did not become a serious concern until their historically recent linkup with the drug trade, then supplemented by "revolutionary taxation" in the form of kidnapping and extortion. Thus they—and insurgency/counterinsurgency—cannot be separated from narcotics/counternarcotics.

There are times, then, when negotiations and "humanitarian assistance" alone are inadequate. The insurgents, as *disciplined groups*—this term to make clear that leadership and manpower invariably have varying agendas, which are not necessarily overlapping—are not agrarian or national reformers any more than were the Viet Cong or Filipino CCP. They are political actors. They produce the bulk of the death and destruction being visited

upon the country. Indeed, one of the signal successes of the human rights agenda has been to deflect attention to the symptom (the popular reaction against insurgency) rather than to the cause (insurgency).[58]

Certainly Colombia's democracy is imperfect, but much of the recent commentary seems overwrought, ethnocentric, and more than a little under-researched. Yes, the system itself has been a significant factor in producing alienation, particularly through repression of leftist actors who have endeavored to work within that system. Still, alienation and insurgency are not the same phenomenon, and the one does not necessarily lead to the other. For that, ideology, motivation, and group dynamics must also be examined. The original insurgency dynamic, detailed initially in this monograph, has been superseded in the FARC case by another, much deadlier conflict, one which has taken on a life of its own.

In this fight, Colombian government policy may not be "right," but certainly there is much that is being advanced as analysis of the Colombian situation that is wrong. Drugs, to repeat, are not the central element of Colombia's problem. That is state fragmentation. We can talk of nothing until the government actually exercises its writ within its national territory. This will come about only through a combination of military and socio-economic-political means. Security force adaptation is a necessary but not sufficient component in this campaign. *That* must be a *national* effort which mobilizes the Colombian people in a determined, counterrevolutionary socio-economic-political restoration which not only ends the FARC insurgency but leaves Colombia a stronger democracy.

Colombia, then, urgently needs:

- **A National Campaign Plan.** "Plan Colombia" was a statement of strategic vision rather than a plan. The closest thing to an actual counterinsurgency approach is COLAR's ongoing effort against the mobility

corridors and base areas, called "Plan 2001." This, by default, is the guiding concept of the struggle but is not *systemic* mobilization directed against the insurgents. A key element of that mobilization must be the constitution of local forces, adequately controlled by integration with the regular security force structure.

- **Political Leadership.** There is no one running the war—there are many small wars being run simultaneously. Principal blame for this rests with the befuddlement and corruption of elements of the national political class, exacerbated by the lack of leadership displayed by President Pastrana. By default, COLAR is thus directing the fight; yet it is but one branch of the armed forces.

- **Coordinated, Integrated Effort.** Colombia as a system is not involved in its own struggle. Though commendable initiative has been shown by some government organizations, others, in particular the offices of the *Fiscalia* (Attorney General) and *Procuraduria* (Solicitor General), have proceeded as though an internal war was not raging. Within the military itself, though great strides have been made in fostering a joint approach, even the forces falling under the Ministry of Defense are not integrated into a coordinated effort. The police, who have done an excellent job at neutralizing insurgent efforts to build urban infrastructure, have alienated the other services through their previous, overly close relations with the United States and thus are not integrated into COLAR's "Plan 2001" or any other national scheme. Yet they are the first line of defense.

- **An Appropriate Legal Framework**. Emergency laws and regulations have not been passed. In their absence, it is difficult to expect sustained progress to be made in restoring the national writ over alienated

territory and populace. Not only have the security forces been left unprotected and operationally hamstrung, the door has been opened to abuse of human rights concerns by activist groups. Thus the first responsibility of the state, to secure the lives of its citizens, has been abrogated. Instead, a military with a relatively good human rights record has been systematically, consciously hampered in its efforts to conduct stability operations.

- **Enhanced Information Warfare.** COLAR presently conducts some of the most effective information operations being waged by any armed force in the world. Yet these are not integrated into a national concept, directed at both internal and international audiences. Neither have they been deployed as an integral element of military strategic planning.

- **Enhanced Operational and Acquisitions Funding.** That the situation has moved from a case where the security forces were on both the tactical and strategic defensive, to one where they have seized the initiative, has been due to developments detailed above. These have been accomplished with a paucity of resources and vitally needed equipment, especially aircraft of all sorts. So short has been funding that at times operations have ground to a halt at all but the local level. Critical shortages of spare parts and mobility assets have hampered operations of all services, COLAR in particular.

- **Enhanced Operational Flexibility.** With adequate operational funding, present COLAR "Plan 2001" is solid and likely will be successful. Possibilities exist, though, for further force multiplication. This can come through integration of more systematic civic action in reclaimed areas, augmented by an increased tempo of special

operations. These should be treated as strategic assets, rather than run at local initiative in response to tactical opportunities.

ENDNOTES

1. More lengthy treatment of this subject may be found in my *Maoist Insurgency Since Vietnam*, London: Frank Cass, 1996.

2. Latest figures for Colombia, for the year 2000, are 38,820 muertas violentas; the U.S. figure for the same year is less than 16,000.

3. See Charles W. Berquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986. This source is useful not only for its look at Colombian history but also for its insights into the political dimensions of insurgency in general. Also valuable is Sanchez G. Gonzalo and Aguilera P. Mario, eds., *Memoria de un Pais en Guerra—Los Mil Dias: 1899-1902*, Bogota: Planeta, 2001.

4. Numerous sources on this period are available. For a particularly useful contribution, see John C. Pollock, "Violence, Politics and Elite Performance: The Political Sociology of La Violencia in Colombia," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 1975, pp. 22-50. For an excellent regional perspective, see James D. Henderson, *When Colombia Bled: A History of the Violencia in Tolima*, Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985.

5. The so-called independent republics were located in southern Cundinamarca and eastern Tolima; they were: Agriari, Viota, Tequendama, Sumapaz, El Pato, Guayabero, Suroeste del Tolima, Rio Chiquito, 26 de Septiembre, and Marquetalia. See Alfredo Molano Bravo, *Trochas y Fusiles*, Bogota: Instituto de Estudios Politicos y Relaciones Internacionales, 1994. For the underlying agrarian dynamic which saw peasant cultivators moving into and defending previously marginal areas, see the excellent Jose Jairo Gonzales Arias and Elsy Marulanda Alvarez, *Historias de Frontera: Colonización y guerras en la Sumapaz*, Bogota: Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular, CINEP, 1990. A particularly useful foldout map may be found interface, pp. 50-51.

6. The best source presently available on the American role in this process is a series of articles by Dennis Rempe, all in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, London; "Guerrillas, Bandits, and Independent Republics: U.S. Counter-insurgency Efforts in Colombia 1959-1965," Vol. 6, No. 3, Winter 1995, pp. 304-327; "An American Trojan Horse?

Eisenhower, Latin America, and the Development of U.S. Internal Security Policy 1954-1960," Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring 1999, pp. 34-64; and "The Origin of Internal Security in Colombia: Part I—a CIA Special Team Surveys La Violencia, 1959-60," Vol. 10, No. 3, Winter 1999, pp. 24-61. His M.A. thesis is *United States National Security and Low-Intensity Conflict in Colombia 1947-1965*, Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Department of History, The University of Calgary, March 1994. His Ph.D. dissertation, *Counterinsurgency in Colombia: A U.S. National Security Perspective*, an expansion upon the M.A. thesis topic, is being completed for the University of Miami.

7. For this early period, see Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez, *Las FARC, 1949-1966: De la Autodefensa a la Combinacion de Todas las Formas de Lucha*, Bogota: Instituto de Estudios Politicos y Relaciones Internacionales, 1994.

8. For recent consideration of the this group, see Corporacion Observatorio Para la Paz, Las Verdaderas Intenciones del ELN, Bogota: Intermedio, 2001. A useful chronology is at pp. 255-270. A companion volume (1999) is *Las Verdaderas Intenciones de las FARC*.

9. For a discussion of the Colombian narcotics regime, see Francisco E. Thoumi, "Why the Illegal Psychoactive Drugs Industry Grew in Colombia," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Fall 1992, pp. 37-63.

10. A useful overview of this period may be found in Robert S. Gordon, *From Cuadrilla to FARC, Inc.: The Transformation of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, unpublished graduation requirements paper at Air University, Montgomery, AL: Maxwell AFB, April 1999.

11. For an overview of U.S. policy and its development, see Nina M. Serafino, *CRS Report for Congress—Colombia: The Problem of Illegal Narcotics and U.S.-Colombian Relations*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, March 1, 1999; and *Drug Control: Narcotics Threat From Colombia Continues to Grow*, Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office, June 1999.

12. The llanos are such a sparsely inhabited region because the topsoil is only approximately 7 cm deep and very acidic; as one moves away from the eastern mountain range, there is less land use, thus more sparse population. Interview with government development specialist, August 12, 1999, Villavicencio.

13. Captured shortly after the Seventh Conference, normally rendered in Colombia with the Roman numeral, thus VII Conference, the official FARC text of this proceeding, mimeo, 41 pages on legal-sized paper, and titled simply *Informa Central a la Septima Conference*, has long been available in Colombia in photocopy. Also useful is a FARC publication, *Historia de Las FARC-EP*, no publications data, original in cloth wraps, which contains discussion of conferences and plenums from the II Conference to the December 25-27, 1987, Plenum. Myriad such FARC documents have come into the hands of the authorities over the decades of the conflict. Summaries and assessments are in circulation. All major Colombian security force units have access to a "Point Paper" titled *Conferencias-Plenos*, which presents the main conclusions and directives of important FARC congresses and plenums, both regular and enlarged. Long since reduced to virtual boilerplate for widespread, continuous dissemination, the "paper" has lost all original identification and publications data. The VII Conference itself has been closely analyzed, because, in addition to the subjects already mentioned, it produced the FARC "Strategic Plan" (*Plan Estrategico*) in general outline. Though amplified and revised slightly—principally, as concerns anticipated time frame (the original called for an 8-year, 1982-90, drive to state power)—the plan remains the basic strategic document towards which all FARC activities are directed.

14. Interview with author, July 26, 2000, Hurlburt Field, Florida.

15. An excellent discussion of this period is Leon Zamosc, "Peasant Struggles in the 1970s in Colombia," in Susan Eckstein, ed., *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 102-131. See also Jonathan Hartlyn, "Civil Violence and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Colombia," in Roy Licklider, ed., *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*, New York: New York University Press, 1993, pp. 37-61.

16. Spencer interview. Latest figures give FARC 66 fronts grouped under 7 larger bloques. Its supreme organ is a seven-man Secretariat which nominally reports to a central command, or Estado Mayor Central, of 25 members (strength has varied).

17. For an effort, not completely successful, to conceptualize Latin American insurgency, to include the position of Colombian movements therein, see Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, "Winners, Losers, and Also-Rans: Toward a Comparative Sociology of Latin American Guerrilla Movements," in Susan Eckstein, ed., *Power and Popular Protest*, pp. 132-181.

18. Readily available on this subject is the English version of a Spanish language document, *Balance Financing by Drug Trafficking FARC*, Bogota: Comite Interinstitucional de Lucha Contra las Finanzas de la Subversion, March 1999. A companion volume, not available in English, deals with *Balance Narcofinanciacion ELN*, Bogota: Comite Interinstitucional de Lucha Contra las Finanzas de la Subversion, April 1999. More recent figures may be found in Jesus Enrique la Rotta Mendoza, *Finanzas de la Subversion Colombiana: Una Forma de Explotar una Nacion*, Bogota: Editorial Los Ultimos Patriotas, 1996; and *El Narcotrafico, una Amenaza Para la Seguridad Nacional*, Bogota: Ministry of National Defense, November 2000. Detailed work on the specific nature of FARC links with the narcotics trade may be found in the various articles of Steve Salisbury, esp. "Bandit Broadcasts," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 1988, pp. 41-43; and "Raids Find Proof of Colombian Rebel Drug-Running," *The Washington Times*, March 20, 2001, p. 1.

19. Arturo Alape, *Tirofijo: Los Suños Y Los Montañas, 1964-1984*, Bogota: Planeta, 1998, is particularly good for this period.

20. For a discussion of this period, to include the attack on Las Delicias, see David Spencer, "A Lesson for Colombia," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1997, pp. 474-477.

21. For this period, as well as the attacks described in the following paragraph, see David Spencer, "Bogota Continues to Bleed as FARC Find Their Military Feet," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 1998, pp. 35-40.

22. For background information on Colombia's previous efforts to negotiate peace with its various insurgent bodies, see Marc Chernick, "Negotiating Peace Amid Multiple Forms of Violence: The Protracted Search for a Settlement to the Armed Conflicts in Colombia," in Cynthia J. Arnson, ed., *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, pp. 159-195. See also Lawrence Boudon, "Guerrillas and the State: The Role of the State in the Colombian Peace Process," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, No. 28, Pt. 2, May 1996, pp. 279-297.

23. Colombian media report regularly on the abuse of the Zona. Articles in a daily such as *El Tiempo* appear regularly. Two illustrations of the wealth of data which may be obtained from such sources may be found in the "Actualidad" section of the *El Tiempo* papers of September 13, 1998, p. 12A ("Diografia de un Despeje") and November 1, 1998, p. 14A ("El ABC del Despeje"). Both are accompanied by excellent maps. Background to activities already going on in the five municipalities

which became the Zona may be found by examining appropriate selections in Manuel Vicente Peña, *La Paz de Las FARC*, Bogota: Fundacion Para los Deberes Humanos, 1997.

24. Interview, March 28, 2000, at a divisional headquarters; comments which follow are from this same interview.

25. For details on composition and budget of the armed forces, reference may be found in an article as notable for its misunderstanding of the rudiments of internal war as for its excellent data: "Fuerzas Publicas: Una Empresa de Billones de Pesos Que No Marcha," *Poder & Dinero*, No. 47, June 1997, pp. 26-35.

26. For a useful discussion of the Colombian security forces at this time, prior to the reforms to be discussed in this article, see David Passage, *The United States and Colombia: Untying the Gordian Knot*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, March 2000; as well as a condensed version of this same paper more focused upon the military itself, "Colombia in Turmoil: How the U.S. Could Help," *Special Warfare*, Winter 2000, pp. 8-15.

27. For a discussion of this issue, see Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schultz, "Colombia's Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads," *Strategic Review*, Winter 2000, pp. 3-22.

28. A much-cited article claims such developed because the dynamic of internal war, in effect, rewarded those involved. See Nazih Richani, "The Political Economy of Violence: The War-System in Colombia," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 39, No. 2, Summer 1992, pp. 37-81. Though I find its data and argument interesting, my disagreement with this article's theme is simple: it reifies events without ever considering, in any systematic fashion, the key notion of agency. Put simply, it imputes motives to those whom it does not interview.

29. A fine summary of much that is described above, complete with accurate figures, is "El Revolcon," *Semana*, June 4-11, 2001, pp. 36-41.

30. For example, the August 1996 attack on the company-size base at Las Delicias mentioned earlier was but one of 22 simultaneous assaults, most guerrilla action, carried out throughout the country. As a COLAR working paper (draft, no publications data) states:

> These were carried out in different directions, each with great initial intensity that caused disorientation among the unit commanders, who, seeing their troops in imminent danger,

caused even greater confusion in army headquarters as it tried to respond across the length and breadth of the country, especially with the use of air assets, to the simultaneous calls for help from the attacked troops.

31. Transcript of Mono JoJoy's briefing to his Front commanders in mid-1999; the tape-recorded meeting was broadcast to other FARC units and intercepted by COLAR. The transcript is highly revealing, dealing with a wide variety of FARC organizational and operational matters. A good discussion of the contents may be found in "La Doctrina 'JoJoy'," *Cambio*, January 22, 2001, pp. 19-27. That JoJoy's briefing, which lasted hours, accurately reflects the thinking of FARC as an organization may be judged by comparing the intercept with the captured minutes of the March 21-25, 2000, Plenum of the Estado Mayor Central, FARC's Central Committee in a communist hierarchy. Hitherto available only in copies of the original document, it has recently been printed as one of the selections in an unclassified COLAR anthology (Spanish language) of FARC documents, Estratagemas: "El Arte de Engañar al Enemigo" (no publication data, but Bogota: COLAR, 2001).

32. The Dabieba shootdown involved but one of the potential landing zones (LZ) in the area. This area preparation is the key to the technique. At Dabeiba, sources indicate, a new wrinkle was that the prepared positions, built to create a true zone ambush, were not manned in advance, as had been the norm. Rather, "watchers" were in position and called for the "fill" only once the actual LZ had been determined by the delivery of government close air support (CAS). In an interview in February 2001 with a COLAR Special Forces lieutenant, badly wounded in a different incident, revealed, as per his experience, the use of pressure mines placed on potential LZs. This technique, which was common in Vietnam and El Salvador, has not, to my knowledge, been encountered frequently in Colombia. Yet instances of explosives placed on LZs in Colombia by forces under Marulanda have been recorded since at least 1964. It is known, as per interviews conducted February 2001 with COLAR intelligence personnel, that FARC has been involved in intense workshops designed to implement and standardize counter-helicopter techniques. Among these apparently are efforts to rig charges in the trees if the LZ lends itself to such.

33. Supporting arms were flown in using standard helicopter sling-rigs. Such techniques have become standard for COLAR.

34. This would have been the first use of SAMs but was apparently not the first time FARC tried to use the weapon. An earlier report from a planned attack upon San Jose del Guaviare mentioned equipment

which matched in particulars that described for this operation. What has changed, to my mind, in the SAM debate is that earlier reports I examined involved individuals who were assigned to guard boxes or containers they were told contained SAMs. None claimed to have actually seen a missile. More recent reports do claim to have actually seen the weapon. These reports have included mention of Caucasians (possibly ex-Yugoslav) responsible for making the equipment operational.

35. For example, East German-manufactured AKMs provided by corrupt Peruvian officials (after legal shipment from Jordan) are now common. The impact of this influx of high quality weapons immediately became apparent on the battlefield. Previously, stocks of captured weapons held at COLAR brigades evinced a decidedly mixed nature, with healthy percentages from Venezuelan official stocks and Norinco batches imported originally by California firms, as evidenced by dealer stamps, in addition to the expected captured Galil rifles. This multiplicity of pieces, though, seems to have been replaced, particularly in Bloque Oriental, by the AKMs.

36. Tapes examined December 2000, Colombian division holdings.

37. This has been standard since the COLAR counter in July 1999 all but wiped out the manpower of two fronts, creating a serious morale problem.

38. Interview, March 29, 2000, at a divisional headquarters.

39. Such goes to the heart of the argument concerning FARC goals. In all it says and does internally, it is noteworthy that FARC continues to see itself as not only socialist but Marxist-Leninist in a world which has strayed from the correct doctrine. This was the approach of *Sendero Luminoso*, with FARC now seeing itself as the beacon for those who continue to believe in "the way."

40. The schooling system is intended to solidify the FARC Marxist-Leninist ideological position, with all commanders being required to pass through ideological indoctrination curricula. These are established, with programs of instruction (POI) and texts. COLAR sources interviewed in February 2001 indicated that they had not yet obtained these materials, which might well have actually been seized but remained at lower levels, given the low priority attached to such as compared to more traditional order of battle (OB) data.

41. Most complete discussion to date of this episode is "Las Farc Cayeron en la Trampa," *Semana*, June 4-11, 2001, pp. 64-72.

42. Virtually all sources place the number of dead due to "the war" at 3,600-5,000 per year (from all sectors, not just the military), a relatively low figure when one considers that California's 1990 murder figure was approximately 3,600 for a population of some 30 million. Yet the bulk of the burden may be considered hidden. The various estimates of more than a million displaced persons since 1995 are well-known. At any one time, there are 300-350 military personnel, most COLAR, assigned to the Rehabilitation Battalion after release from the larger Military Hospital in Bogota: 71 percent gunshot, 5 percent mines; significantly, 15 percent are listed as psychiatric casualties. This is not publicized. (Military figures from interviews with author, February 6, 2001, Bogota.)

43. Extensive interviews conducted in recent years with COLAR command personnel; most recently, May 2001.

44. With respect to the Vietnamese connection, this is the assessment of analysts such as myself and Dave Spencer, a conclusion we have reached based upon evidence contained in the likes of interrogation of prisoners of war (IPW) reports, interviews with insurgent prisoners and personalities, captured documents, and associated documentation (such as course lists, in Vietnamese, obtained in Vietnam, which show attendance by members of Colombian insurgent groups). The relationship of the Vietnamese with Latin American groups, such as Cuban armed forces and El Salvador's FMLN, and their transfer of Vietnamese doctrine and techniques, is better documented. See David E. Spencer and Jose Angel Moroni Bracamonte, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995; and Spencer, *From Vietnam to El Salvador: The Saga of the FMLN Sappers and Other Guerrilla Special Forces in Latin America*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.

45. The most outstanding works on the subject remain those of Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966; and *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986, esp. Chaps. 9 and 10 of Sect. IV, "Strategy." Useful for strategic view is Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army*, New York: Bantam Books, 1968; better, for operational implementation, is Truong Chinh, *Primer for Revolt*, reprint, New York: Praeger, 1963. The most useful discussion for those interested in how the original sources and Vietnamese thinking played themselves out on the battlefield is Wray R. Johnson, *Vietnam and American Doctrine for Small Wars*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 2000.

46. More research is required on this point. In a conversation with Rafael Pardo, former Colombian Minister of Defense, on April 19, 2001, at the University of San Diego conference, "Drug Trafficking and Security in Colombia and Mexico," he indicated that the prohibition came not from insurgent demands but from requests of the security forces themselves, thus to maintain their monopoly of legitimate force.

47. I reach this conclusion based upon interviews, in particular those I had with Generals Millan, del Rio, and Usategui, August 4, 1999, in Bogota.

48. Our involvement in Southeast Asia has been well-covered from a security perspective. Far less known or understood is our Latin American campaign. A superb recent contribution, with considerable lessons for the present situation, is Alfred A. Barr and Caesar D. Sereseres, "U.S. Unconventional Warfare Operations and Lessons From Central America, 1980-90: A Successful Economy of Force Engagement Strategy," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 1-32.

49. That such is the case in Colombia becomes clear when reading even generally supportive publications such as *Toward Greater Peace and Security in Colombia*, New York: Independent Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations, 2000; and *U.S. Interests and Objectives in Colombia*, The Working Group on Colombia, Council on Foreign Relations, 2000. For a trenchant but accurate overview, see Michael Radu, "The Perilous Appeasement of Guerrillas," *Orbis*, Vol. 44, No. 3, Summer 2000, pp. 363-379.

50. Colombia is now the third largest recipient of U.S. aid, trailing only Israel and Egypt. Particulars of *Plan Colombia* and the U.S. contribution may be found in David Spencer and Heather Noss, *Colombia: Strategic End State, Goals, and Means . . . A Workshop Report*, Alexandria, VA: Center for Strategic Studies, The CNA Corporation, November 2000. This is one of the best "overview" publications available on the current situation.

51. Little serious research has been conducted on *autodefensas* phenomenon, though in its essential dynamic, it does not differ from similar systemic reactions in conflicts as dissimilar as those in the Philippines and Ulster. On Colombia, the work of David Spencer was an early contribution, following hard on the heels of the superb series by German Castro Caycedo in the "Actualidad" section of *Cromos*, issues of January 22 and 29, and February 12 and 26, 1996, published as "Historia Desconocida de los Paramilitares," Parts I, II, III, and IV. Colombia's Ministry of National Defense has issued the English

language document, *Illegal Self-Defense Groups in Colombia*, Bogota: December 2000. It is noteworthy that early, inadequate press coverage has given way to more sober assessments which have considerable value for scholars. Examples are Juan Forero, "Rightist Squads in Colombia Beating the Rebels," *The New York Times*, December 5, 2000, p. 1; Scott Wilson, "Colombians Petition for Force Against Kidnappers," *The Washington Post*, November 25, 2000, p. A13; and "Colombia's Other Army," *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2001, p. A1; to include accompanying transcript of lengthy interview with Carlos Castaño; Juan O. Tamayo, "Bloody Paramilitary's Support Grows," *Miami Herald*, March 29, 2001, p. 1; and Karl Penhaul, "Outlaw Role Seen in Colombia Effort," *Boston Globe*, March 28, 2001, p. 8.

52. Dated February 2000, available at *http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/colombia/*. It might be more appropriate to call this document "slanderous." The materials presented, a mix of double hearsay and tenuous connections, should never have survived even the most cursory vetting process. Indeed, the lot would no doubt have ended up on the cutting room floor had U.S. citizens been at issue. I would surmise it was because those accused were foreigners that the normal standards of evidence could be discarded.

53. In fact, the School of the Americas, which has now been renamed and reorganized, whatever the HRW claims, focused largely on technical training. That this-or-that officer might have gone there would seem statistically quite irrelevant, as the U.S. Army itself has pointed out in defending the institution. The nature of the critique may readily be found; for a typical example, see David Pace, "Critics Link Army Schools to Crime," AP-NY-March 23, 1998, 1759 EDT, internet download. There one finds, e.g., Representative Esteban Torres, D-CA, saying, "The training that takes place in this country of military troops from another country, on how to seduce, torture, intimidate . . . [sic] is tantamount to what Nazis did."

54. These figures, as well as those which follow in the next several paragraphs, are taken from my notes during field work conducted in the region, July-August 1997.

55. Of course, this argument will not stand up if FARC violence is seen as self-defense and therefore justifiable. Regrettably, this seems to be the position of a strong thread of the human rights campaign in Colombia, activism disguised as altruism.

56. I have dealt with this analytical puzzle directly in "Evaluating Insurgent/Counterinsurgent Performance," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Winter 2000, pp. 21-46.

57. Single best source on the approach of *Sendero Luminoso*, as well as its astonishing level of violence, is David Scott Palmer, "The Revolutionary Terrorism of Peru's Shining Path," in Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context*, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, pp. 249-308.

58. The area of human rights is a statistical minefield but one the security forces have found they must enter. They have thus gone to great lengths to demonstrate and publicize the nature of deaths and other crimes related to the insurgency (as opposed to those attributed to Colombia's extraordinary crime rate)—to the point of publishing on the COLAR web site (*http://www.ejercito.mil.co*) the particulars of every individual who appears as but a bit of data on a table. These demonstrate clearly the validity of the long-standing security force contention that it is the insurgents who are overwhelmingly responsible for not just deaths but all forms of human rights abuses. Recently published sources include two excellent works from the Colombian Ministry of Defense: *La Fuerza Publica y los Derechos Humanos en Colombia*, Bogota: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, March 2000, with complete statistics through 1999; and *Informe Anual Derechos Humanos y DIH 2000*, Bogota: Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, January 2001, with complete statistics through October 2000, available in English as *Annual Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Report 2000*. Statistical updates are published monthly by the Ministry of Defense in all major Colombian media. See, e.g., the full page of data in *El Tiempo*, May 20, 2001, pp. 2-7, covering the January-April 2001 period. One word of caution is in order in using the tables provided in sources such as those above. Though they demonstrate the dominance of the insurgents in all categories except "massacres" (an artificial designation for four or more political victims in a single killing), "guerrilla" casualties are further broken down by group (e.g., FARC, ELN). This same division is not carried out for the *autodefensas*, of which there are at least 11 identified bodies. Instead, they are lumped under the designation of their unofficial coordinating body, AUC. In reality, this body has no command authority over its "members."

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Major General Robert R. Ivany
Commandant

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